

SUMMARY OF WATER CONDITIONS

April 1, 2004 (see below for updates)

March turned out to be dry and unusually warm, setting new monthly temperature records at a number of weather stations. The combination caused early snowmelt and about a 25 percent loss in snowpack water content during the month. As a result, April through July runoff forecasts were reduced about 20 percent from those of last month. Runoff forecasts in the Sacramento River region are still near historic median levels, but southern Sierra river runoff is expected to be considerably below normal. There is enough snowpack and water in storage to avoid drought for this year, but supplies may be short in some areas in the southern part of the Central Valley.

Forecasts of April through July runoff are about 80 percent of average overall, ranging from above normal in a few northern basins to under 60 percent in several southern Sierra basins. Water year runoff forecasts, which include the past winter season, are slightly better at 85 percent of average statewide.

Snowpack water content dropped about 25 percent during March and now stands at 85 percent of average statewide. Much of the lower elevation snow melted swelling streamflow more than would be expected with the limited amount of rain. Last year the snowpack was 65 percent of average on April 1, but showed an unusual gain of 15 percent during the following wet April.

Precipitation from October 1 through March was about 95 percent of average, lowered 10 percent by the dry March. Last year precipitation stood at 100 percent at this time. Precipitation during March was about 40 percent of average statewide from small storms near the beginning and end of the month. The three weeks between were bone dry in all regions of the State.

Runoff for the first six months has been just below average at 90 percent. Last year runoff on this date was 95 percent of average. March runoff overall was near normal at 95 percent, but with a profound difference from relatively dry rain fed streams to above average in many snow fed rivers. Estimated runoff of the eight major rivers of the Sacramento and San Joaquin River regions was 3.6 million acre-feet during March.

Reservoir storage gained about 1.6 million acre-feet during the month, about the normal increase and 105 percent of average for the date. More storage at several northern California reservoirs was precluded by the need to maintain required seasonal flood control space. Reservoir storage one year ago was a little less at 100 percent.

The next Bulletin 120 Update, for conditions as of April 13, will be available April 15. The Water Year Runoff Forecast is expected to drop again, however precipitation is expected mid-week.

April 13, 2004

This update includes the observed precipitation from April 1 through the 13th. The projected median April-July runoff now ranges from 88% (Lake Shasta) to 43% (Tule River). The past week has been very dry throughout the state and, as a result, the forecast is down statewide since April 1. The Northern Sierra 8-Station Index gained 0.0" since April 1. The statewide snowpack is now

65% of average to date, and ranges from 82% in the Northern Sierra to 54% in the Southern Sierra.

April 20, 2004

The April 20 Bulletin 120 forecast update is posted at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgiprogs/iodir/B120UP>

This update includes the observed precipitation from April 14 through the 20th. The projected median April-July runoff now ranges from 92% (Lake Shasta) to 42% (Tule River). During the past week, some precipitation stations in the northern Sierra received at least one inch. The median forecast for all rivers remains lower than the forecast on April 1, however. The Northern Sierra 8-Station Index gained about 1.7 inches during the recent week. The statewide snowpack is now 68% of average to date, and ranges from 88% in the northern Sierra to 56% in the southern Sierra. For current snow pillow information see <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/current/PAGE6>

We expect negligible amounts of precipitation in California through the rest of April. The latest NWS Climate Prediction Center long-range weather forecast maps at http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/lead01/off_index.html suggest above normal temperatures in the southern Sierra and Northern California with equal chances of normal precipitation throughout California for the May-July period.

The next Bulletin 120 forecast, for conditions on May 1, will be available by May 10.